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ABSTRACT

Democracy has always been prone to self-destruction, and it was only after the American Civil War that democracy--or at least constitutional representative government--acquired a respectable reputation. There are two very different types of democracies each with its underlying philosophy, value system, and view of human nature. These are constitutional democracy and utopian democracy. The contrast between the American Revolution and the French is in essence the difference between the two types of democracy. The American Revolution strove to preserve English rights and legal institutions, and the old English tradition of the rule of law was made more rigid in the American governmental system. The old Judeo-Christian view of imperfect human beings was implicit in the Constitution. The French Revolution began with a vision of the liberation of mankind and ended in a military dictatorship. The utopian view of human nature is an embodiment of Jean-Jacques Rousseau's philosophy that assumes human beings are naturally good, generous, sociable, and peaceful. Constitutional democracy is less concerned with end results than is utopian democracy. The former is concerned with equal opportunity, not with equality in results or performance. Both types of democracy--especially in developing countries--have the potential to deteriorate into totalitarian regimes. (BZ)

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Raymond English

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Raymond English is the vice president of the Ethics and Public Policy Center. This essay was adapted from an address he gave at a symposium sponsored by the Phelps-Stokes Fund on "The Role of the Individual in a Democracy" in Kingston, Jamaica, November 1982. Copies of this title and others listed on the inside back cover are available at $1 each from the address below.

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Constitutional Democracy vs. Utopian Democracy

RAYMOND ENGLISH

You cannot make the world safe for democracy; it is a dangerous profession.
—G. K. CHESTERTON

No one pretends that democracy is perfect or all-wise. Indeed, it has been said that democracy is the worst form of government except all those other forms that have been tried from time to time.
—WINSTON S. CHURCHILL

Democracy, that is, popular, representative government, has two critical weaknesses: it is liable to destabilizing changes of policy, and it is prone to errors of judgment. It can be the least objectionable type of government. Or democracy can result in appallingly bad government. The continuing problem is to keep a good democratic system from deteriorating.

No matter what institutional or constitutional constraints are set up, popular government depends ultimately on sound moral perceptions by the people and their leaders—political, religious, and educational, in the largest sense of the word. In our time, when democracy is the reigning shibboleth in political controversy, free government is in great jeopardy, and popular understanding of its essential nature is especially necessary.

Everything important about morals and politics has been said over and over again, but we forget easily, or—worse—we imagine that we can find better answers than those of our ancestors. Politics and government are not carried out in a laboratory or an inventor's workshop, where everything can be kept under control; they involve a complicated, continuous interplay of innu-

merable human factors, a process in which choice is narrowly limited and is almost always among lesser and greater evils. Michael Oakeshott once said, "This is the best of all possible worlds, and *everything* in it is a necessary evil."

The Historical Record

Democracy—government by the people—has always been prone to self-destruction. Plato analyzed the natural drift of democracy toward moral anarchy and suicidal policies and, consequently, toward despotism. Polybius and Cicero concurred, and recommended a mixed government in which elements of monarchy, aristocracy, and democracy mingled. Aristotle, who saw more value in democracy, still condemned the extreme egalitarian variety, recommending a moderate, constitutional form.

The ill repute of democracy persisted as prominent republics slid downhill. After a hundred years of class war, the Roman republic ended as a military dictatorship. Italian republics in the late Middle Ages were torn by faction and, by the end of the fifteenth century, were incapable of resisting invasion by France, Spain, and the Holy Roman Empire. After the English civil war in the seventeenth century, the Commonwealth—a brief experiment in parliamentary republicanism—turned into a military dictatorship under Oliver Cromwell.

Then came the French Revolution. Its republican-democratic experiments quickly led to a Jacobin or utopian concept of democracy, which in turn brought on the Reign of Terror and the long military dictatorship of Bonaparte.

Even the American Civil War seemed at first to confirm all the pessimistic prognoses of democracy. The United States seemed on the verge of dissolution. That Abraham Lincoln was painfully conscious of the vulnerability of democracy is evident in the Gettysburg Address of 1863:

> Fourscore and seven years ago, our fathers brought forth upon this continent a new nation, conceived in liberty and dedicated to the proposition that all men are created equal.
>
> Now we are engaged in a great civil war, testing whether that nation, or any nation so conceived and so dedicated, can long endure.

The words are so familiar that we forget their real urgency, their reiteration of the age-old skepticism as to the viability—the ability to "long endure"—of democratic governments.

The American union did endure, and did so without lapsing into military dictatorship. Democracy having thus proved itself, nation after nation adopted more or less democratic reforms. In 1867, Great Britain's Second Reform Bill gave the franchise to many urban working-class men. In the same year Mexico reverted to a republic after a five-year experiment with monarchy. Italy was finally united in 1870 under a constitutional monarch and ministers responsible to a two-chamber parliament. Even Bismarck's unified Germany set up token representative institutions when the German Empire was formed in 1871. France became a republic again after its defeat by Prussia; the constitution of the Third Republic was ratified in 1875. Even Japan moved toward constitutional representative government, a restricted form of which was granted by the emperor.

The devolution of power and granting of self-government occurred in the British Empire also: the British North America Act recognized democratic representative federal government in Canada (1867); the Commonwealth of Australia was established (1901); New Zealand gained dominion status (1907); and the Union of South Africa was set up (1910) despite the calamitous Boer War (1899-1902).

My point is that democracy—or at least constitutional representative government—acquired a respectable reputation after the American Civil War. Democracy seemed to be tougher and more durable than historians and political thinkers had up to that time assumed.

During the twentieth century, democracy has become more and more fashionable. Today, indeed, it is globally held to be the *only* legitimate form of government. In the process of popularization the term has lost whatever exact meaning it once had. Since no one dares to criticize democracy, virtually every political leader claims that his particular form of government is democratic—and indeed is the *only* truly democratic form.

What caused this unanimous endorsement of democracy? First and foremost was the victory in two world wars of the constitutional, self-governing, free nations over the despot-

isms—over the autocratic, militaristic rule of Kaiser Wilhelm II in 1918, and over the dictatorships of Hitler and Mussolini and the Japanese military hierarchs in World War II. Second in importance, probably, was the break-up of old empires and the rise of independence movements in former imperial possessions. In these cases, appeals to "the people" and their right to be free and self-governing were propaganda devices. The idea of independence went with "national self-determination," and "national self-determination" was inseparable from popular self-government. Finally, socialism and Communism, which have exercised great influence since 1945, managed to lay a special claim to democracy and thus contributed greatly to its popularization. The idea of democracy has, indeed, been a rallying cry for the left and the egalitarians since the "Levelers" of seventeenth-century England. It has been revived again and again by Jacobins, the followers of Babeuf, Saint-Simonians, Fabian socialists, Bolsheviks, and other radical reformers.

Today everyone is in favor of democracy, just as everyone is in favor of peace. Such vague unanimity is, for all its superficial beneficence, a damnable nuisance. Even in non-totalitarian countries, semantic obfuscation replaces political thought, and the linguistic nihilism of Orwell's *1984* is often uncomfortably close: "War is Peace," "Freedom is Slavery," "Dictatorship is Democracy."

Two Types of Democracy

A few old-fashioned distinctions are in order. There are two very different types of democracy, each with its underlying philosophy, value system, and view of human nature. We may call these *constitutional democracy* and *utopian democracy*. The distinction is oversimple, but it is useful.

Constitutional Democracy

Consider the contrast between the American Revolution and the French. The American Revolution strove to preserve, as far as possible, English rights and legal institutions, and it established a complex form of government with limited powers and multiple checks and balances. The old English tradition of the

rule of law was, if anything, made more rigid in the American governmental system. Full democracy, in the nineteenth-century sense of male adult suffrage, came gradually, state by state, in the forty years following the ratification of the Constitution, though blacks and Indians were still excluded.

The government of the United States was generally admired by progressive liberals in Europe. However, the new republic was in no sense utopian. The old Judeo-Christian view of imperfect human beings was implicit in the Constitution. Madison summed it up in an often quoted passage in *Federalist* 51: "If men were angels, no government would be necessary. If angels were to govern men, neither external nor internal controls on government would be necessary. . . ." Given that assumption about our common nature, the American system did not promise heaven on earth. Its aim was to "establish justice, insure domestic tranquillity, provide for the common defense, promote the general welfare, and secure the blessings of liberty to ourselves and our ~~prosperity~~ post-erity"—a limited vision, much of which was attainable.

Among the vast majority of Americans there was also no thought of jettisoning the main religious and ethical values of Western civilization, no hint that new values could be discovered. Indeed, the Declaration of Independence echoed a phrase that had been commonplace for philosophers, lawyers, and theologians since at least the time of the Stoics and Roman law—"The Laws of Nature and of Nature's God." In the great central tradition of Europe, natural law, or the rule of right reason, had played a major part, although Christian teaching insisted that, since the Fall, right reason needed the support of both heavenly grace and positive laws. Milton's Archangel Michael explained the matter to Adam:

> Since thy original lapse, true Liberty
> Is lost, which always with right Reason dwells
> Twinn'd, and from her hath no dividual being:
> Reason in man obscur'd, or not obey'd,
> Immediately inordinate desires
> And upstart Passions catch the Government
> From Reason, and to servitude reduce
> Man 'til then free [*Paradise Lost*, XII, 83-90].

The idea of normative, traditional values held firm in the new republic. Most American intellectual and political leaders knew Montesquieu's *Spirit of the Laws* and would have agreed with his assessment of the basic principle (or attribute) required by the three types of government: *fear* in despotisms, *honor* in lawful monarchies, and *virtue* in republics or democracies. Montesquieu explained what he meant by virtue as follows:

> . . . virtue is a self-renunciation, which is ever arduous and painful.
>
> This virtue may be defined as the love of the laws and of our country. As such love requires a constant preference of public to private interest, it is the source of all private virtues; for they are nothing more than this very preference itself.
>
> This love is peculiar to democracies. In these alone the government is intrusted to private citizens. Now a government is like everything else: to preserve it we must love it. . . .
>
> Everything, therefore, depends on establishing this love in a republic; and to inspire it ought to be the principal business of education: but the surest way of instilling it into children is for parents to set them an example [*Spirit of the Laws*, IV, 5].

A similar normative view is found in Montesquieu's definition of liberty:

> It is true that in democracies the people seem to act as they please; but political liberty does not consist in unlimited freedom. In governments, that is, in societies directed by laws, liberty can consist only in the power of doing what we ought to will, and in not being constrained to do what we ought not to will [*Spirit of the Laws*, XI, 3, 4].

In short, constitutional republics or democracies are disciplined and require a disciplined—a self-disciplined—people, who will agree voluntarily on common values, common standards of decency, and certain rules to control the often dirty game of politics. Because the assumption in constitutional democracies is that people are imperfect and prone to temptation, such political systems also assume the necessity of strong institutions, the firm rule of law, and an education that induces discipline, hard work, and public service.

Utopian Democracy

The other type of democracy, the kind that appeared, flourished, and withered in the opening years of the French Revolution, is harder to characterize. It was an undisciplined

political movement resting on a society that lacked spontaneous discipline. One can blame the Ancien Régime for the explosion of anarchy, but Jacobin, utopian democracy is in its very nature anarchic, undisciplined, and self-destructive.

The utopian view of human nature become predominant largely through the influence of Jean-Jacques Rousseau. It assumes that human beings are naturally good, kind, generous, sociable, and peaceful. It assumes that no rigid moral values and rules are necessary; that if each person follows his own spontaneous inclinations and interests, a general condition of happiness will ensue; that the causes of evil and unhappiness are coercion, laws, and private property. Above all, it assumes that a new and perfect society can be built in which freedom, equality, and fraternity will reign.

The appeal of such ideas in a society suddenly freed from a rigid and anachronistic feudal monarchy is understandable. Freedom is an intoxicating environment after generations of repression and slavery. Unfortunately the Rousseau-utopian prognosis was in error, as Edmund Burke pointed out when the Revolution was hardly two years old.

The high hopes were soon disappointed. In the anarchy of party struggle, one political group after another was eliminated. Soon elimination became extermination. The economy collapsed. Terror spread from the capital to the provinces. Robespierre and his Jacobin politburo claimed to establish the "dictatorship of liberty" (an early Orwellian oxymoron), which in turn was overthrown. Power passed within a year or two to the only disciplined organization left in France—the army; and with the army came Napoleon. The movement that began with a vision of the liberation of mankind ended in a military dictatorship that almost succeeded in turning all Europe into a colony of France.

These bits of history are worth recalling, because they have often been repeated (*mutatis mutandis*) and are being repeated today. If a democracy is based on, or drifts into, utopianism, indiscipline, and moral anarchy, all emanating from a false notion of human nature, it is almost impossible to prevent the system from falling into political anarchy, violent factional struggles, and economic decline. For that condition there is a dreadful remedy: dictatorship, repression by military force, one-party

rule, secret police, terrorism, state monopoly of communications and education, and all the other trappings of despotism. The remedy is worse than the illness, but people embrace it in despair. Too late they realize the slavery into which they have fallen.

How Democracies Deteriorate

Not only does *utopian* democracy deteriorate into anarchy and then into tyranny, but there is a tendency for *constitutional* democracy to degenerate in the same way. An extreme example is the change in only fifteen years of the Weimar Republic into the bloody nightmare of Nazism. A degenerative tendency has been observable in Britain since 1945 and was painfully evident in the United States from about 1965 through the 1970s. Since the early 1950s the rapid subversion of constitutional democracy has been apparent in many developing countries: early competition for power among parties or party leaders leads to instability and social division, which is remedied either by one political leader's suppressing all parties but one, or by a military coup d'état, or by externally supported subversion by a totalitarian force.

These phenomena of deterioration are perhaps inescapable once constitutional limitations and normative moral restraints are shaken, because politics and political competition are ruthless and often vicious when power and money are at stake. When extreme ideological convictions dominate, the political process becomes holy war. Passionate self-righteousness flourishes, and rivals are seen as agents of evil to be exterminated. Political ambition is often ugly; allied with ideological conviction it becomes monstrous.

The Czech author Milan Kundera said in an interview:

> Totalitarianism is not only hell, but also the dream of paradise—the age-old dream of a world where everybody would live in harmony, united by a single common will and faith, without secrets from one another. . . . Once the dream of paradise starts to turn into reality, however, here and there people begin to crop up who stand in its way, and so the rulers of paradise must build a little gulag on the side of Eden. In the course of time this gulag grows ever bigger and more perfect, while the adjoining paradise gets ever smaller and poorer [*Wall Street Journal*, October 29, 1982]

The way to avoid drifting into these dismal political swamps is to hold firmly to the ways of constitutional, moderate, representative democracy. The political moral taught by Plato in *The Laws* and, more consistently, by Aristotle in *The Politics* and *Nicomachaean Ethics* is moderation, the mean, as the way to stability and a reasonably just society. If you aim for too much liberty you will lose all liberty; if you try to build heaven on earth you will wind up with hell.

You establish a comprehensive national health care system; to your astonishment it costs four times as much as you estimated, and the cost rises steadily each year. Doctors, nurses, hospitals, drug companies, and corner pharmacies all raise their prices. Furthermore, large numbers of patients begin to demand unnecessary treatment, for minor or imaginary complaints.

Or you set up a great network of welfare payments for the poor and announce that poverty will be a thing of the past. Instead the numbers of the dependent poor multiply. So do the numbers of bureaucrats and welfare workers. Or you establish payments to support single women with dependent children; the number of such mothers and the sizes of their families then increase, and teenage pregnancies multiply.

Or you are a dedicated socialist, convinced that capitalism and market economies are hopelessly unjust and that they encourage the worst traits in human beings: greed, meanness, callousness, exploitation, ruthless competitiveness. From now on production will be centrally controlled by the state, which will own the fields and factories and set prices. Do greed, meanness, and callousness disappear? Not at all: the greedy, the mean, and the callous climb on the political bandwagon, and as directors of production and distribution they exploit the workers, engage in ruthless struggles for promotion and power, and enjoy special privileges such as access to scarce goods. The system also fosters inefficient production, with the result that the standard of living for the ordinary workers declines.

Some celebrated utopians* have been guilty of the most vi-

*I realize that Marx sneered at utopians, and that he and his disciples claim to be scientific materialists. The fact remains that the brutalities of totalitarian regimes are always justified at the outset by assurances that they are necessary in order to bring (inevitable) progress.

cious atrocities, which explains the paradoxical transformation of utopian democracy into tyranny, terror, and, in our century, totalitarianism. When you are convinced that the human species must be liberated from the conventions, restraints, and institutions inherited from the past in order to attain perfect freedom and justice, you become impatient when actual human beings fail to respond. It seems necessary to compel them to be perfect, and if they don't respond to a little pressure, you increase the dosage. If that fails, then the incorrigible ones must be eliminated.

In this way the lover of the human race, the scientific socialist who is acquainted with the predetermined course of the future, is transmuted into a callous tyrant, for whom the sufferings of individual persons are irrelevant. Moreover, as the resort to violence and terror grows, the regime becomes hated as well as feared, and consequently more terror and more surveillance of potential opponents are inevitable.

Deterioration in Developed Countries

I should like to look at the process of democratic deterioration in developed and less developed countries. Note that I am speaking of a *tendency,* a tendency by no means irreversible, but present to some degree in any constitutional democracy.

In the United States, for example, the impulse toward indiscipline and demoralization appeared soon after independence, and produced the reaction that culminated in the Constitution and the presidency of George Washington. Thereafter we can observe recurring periods of utopian tendencies—for example, in the years of Jacksonian democracy, and in the ambiguous and corrupt "Gilded Age," which inspired embittered commentaries by Mark Twain and Henry Adams, among others. Closer to our own time populism and progressivism arose, bearing streaks of Marxist socialism.

A lasting legacy of the progressive era was the phenomenon called progressive education. This educational philosophy was based largely on the Rousseauist-utopian idea of human nature, the idea that people were "naturally" good, capable of perfection, and equal. This theory of permissive education infiltrated the U.S. educational establishment and significantly influenced later political developments. As Richard Weaver pointed out:

In the past every educational system has reflected to a great extent the social and political constitution of the society which supported it. This was assumed to be a natural and proper thing, since the young were to be trained to take places in the world that existed around them. . . . In the [first half of the twentieth century], however, we have witnessed something never before seen in the form of a systematic attempt to undermine a society's traditions and beliefs through the educational establishment which is usually employed to maintain them. There has been . . . a virtual educational coup d'état carried out by a specially inclined minority. . . . with objectives radically different from those of the state which employed them ["Gnostics of Education," in *Visions of Order*].

In *The Public Philosophy,* Walter Lippmann's disquieting 1955 critique of American democracy, he argued that discipline, moral norms, and natural law are essential if popular government is to check its inherent tendency to make flawed and possibly fatal decisions. Lippmann specifically condemned utopian democracy, and pointed to the prevailing philosophy of education as a major cause of the utopian drift. He asserted elsewhere that traditional, disciplined education is the necessary adjunct of disciplined, constitutional democracy.

> Modern education rejects and excludes from the curriculum of necessary studies, the whole religious tradition of the West. It abandons and neglects, as no longer necessary, the study of the whole classical heritage and of the great works of great men. Thus, there is an enormous vacuum where until a few decades ago there was the substance of education. . . . There is no common faith, no common body of principle, no common body of knowledge, no common moral and intellectual discipline. Yet the graduates of these modern schools are expected to form a civilized community. They are expected to govern themselves, they are expected to have a social conscience. They are expected to arrive by discussion at common purposes ["Education vs. Western Civilization," *The American Scholar,* X (1941), 184].

English educators have unfortunately made a habit of copying the worst features of American public education. Their imitation of "progressive" errors was succeeded in the sixties and seventies by the substitution of "comprehensive high schools" for the old academic grammar schools. The subsequent deterioration of English education was surpassed only by the more advanced deterioration in the United States.

To sum up: the old-fashioned idea called *liberal education*—disciplined, arduous, with a clear curriculum of languages and great literature and philosophical and theological essentials—is the proper education for men and women who are to share constructively in the political, cultural, and economic life of a free and self-disciplined society.

Freedom is indivisible: you cannot have free politics without religious freedom and economic freedom, and you cannot have these without people who have been educated to recognize and practice the disciplines of freedom. Furthermore, you cannot talk seriously about government and politics without taking education seriously. Political philosophy always turns into a philosophy of education.

Whether progressive education influenced recent trends in the politics of the United States may be debatable, but it seems that there is a fairly continuous line from the early John Dewey progressives to the moral relativism, permissiveness, social irresponsibility, and selfish hedonism that marked not only American public education but American society in general in the 1970s. This decade was ushered in by the violent, often anarchic events of the 1960s—anti-war protests, riots in the inner cities, student riots and seizures of university buildings, terrorist bombings. By the mid-1970s these feverish conditions died down; in their place there was a deep public demoralization and defeatism, symptomized by defeat and betrayal in South Vietnam, by the "Watergate" hysteria, and by the pitiful nonresponses to such crises as the breach of international law by Iran's fanatics, the presence in Ethiopia and Angola of Cuban mercenaries, and the flagrant invasion of Afghanistan by Soviet forces.

Yet democracies, unless they drift to the point of no return—that is, brutal, perhaps totalitarian, dictatorship—have a power of self-recovery or self-healing that begins to operate as more and more people realize what ghastly errors have been made. I believe that in both the United States and Britain that process of recovery and recuperation is under way.

Deterioration in Less Developed Countries

More than any other forms of government, democracies depend on the morale and rationality of their citizens. In general,

constitutional democracies in less developed countries that only recently became independent seem to face one or more of the following obstacles:

1. *Inadequate experience in democratic self-government.* This is in striking contrast with the long experience with limited government, the rule of law, and representative institutions in Britain and the United States. This inadequate experience with democracy may show itself in many ways. The competition among political parties and cliques may turn into vicious fighting, including assassinations and other forms of violence. Government, instead of using legal and formal bureaucratic procedures, may rely on cronyism and nepotism. Intoxicated by power, the rulers may engage in grandiose socialistic experiments, vast expenditures on public works, and consequent accumulations of unredeemable national debts. Nkrumah of Ghana and Sukarno of Indonesia are examples of this syndrome. All these tendencies are present in developed nations as well. But they are more obvious and more destabilizing in new, politically inexperienced, economically weak democratic nations.

2. *Lack of deep-rooted patriotism, or a sense of national unity.* This is especially evident in many African states, where tribal loyalties often supersede national loyalty. Such a situation is reminiscent of conditions in France, Germany, England, and Spain at the beginning of the modern period, when feudal particularism and loyalty to one or other great noble often frustrated the development of national unity. The remedy in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries was absolute monarchy—the political equivalent of the one-party or military dictatorships of our time.

National unity may be hindered by other types of division also, such as regional rivalries, serious class distinctions, or clashing personal loyalties to political or union bosses or to extended families.

3. *Lack of an economically developed foundation.* Can democracy work when a large proportion of the electorate is desperately poor and on the edge of starvation, with little prospect of improvement? Under these circumstances the temptation is to vote for extremist leaders, to gamble on revolutionary devices such as seizing the property of the wealthy and the foreign investor, to neutralize or eliminate all opposition, and to rely on mercenaries and agents of foreign powers with imperialistic objectives.

Such a course does little to improve the lot of ordinary people. On the contrary, it makes sound economic development more difficult than before, lowers the standard of living, and sometimes leads to oppression, slave labor, and mass killings. These tendencies are probably encouraged at the outset by traditions of paternalistic and socialistic government and heavy taxes remembered from colonial days. Whatever the cause or excuse, the results are: for the ruling minority, corruption by wealth and power; for the people, misery.

The dangers threatening democracy in developing countries are greater and more intractable than the dangers in older constitutional democracies. The Soviet pattern of dictatorship by an oligarchy under the guise of proletarian (or utopian) democracy is all too attractive in countries that, like Russia in 1917, are economically underdeveloped and politically immature. Utopian, Jacobin-type democracy, with its impossible promises and demands for rapid results, moves swiftly and inexorably to brutal oppression.

Conclusion

As I see it, the only form of democracy that can long endure is the disciplined, limited, constitutional form. This type of democracy (which has various institutional patterns) is founded on a realistic view of human nature. Recognizing the mixed and imperfect character of most human beings, it insists on both external discipline (the rule of law and social moral consensus) and internal discipline (education in self-control, respect for others, willingness to work, love of country, and readiness to serve the public good).

Constitutional democracy, unlike utopian democracy, has limited goals. It tries to offer opportunities for the good life; it encourages everyone to use his talents freely and intelligently. It has no recipe for happiness, but it recognizes the unalienable right to "the *pursuit* of happiness." Finally, constitutional democracy is concerned with freedom and with equal *opportunity*, not with equality in results or performance.

Yet constitutional democracy is always in danger because of the very imperfections of human nature that it recognizes: our

proneness to selfishness, to greed, to laziness, to exploitation of others. Paradoxically, awareness of these imperfections sometimes spurs people to embrace a philosophy asserting the natural goodness of human beings and their perfectibility. This philosophy leads swiftly to communist or socialist experiments, or to military dictatorships, or, worst of all, to totalitarianism and terrorism—to the future as described by George Orwell:

"Imagine a boot stamping on a human face—forever."

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A nuclear physicist (and Episcopal priest), a professor of Christian ethics, and an editor of *America* reflect on the moral and theological implications of nuclear energy.

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